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High School Students Participate in Inaugural Math Academy at Gardner-Webb

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Office of University Communications

August 2, 2013

Classroom Theory and Real World Application Explored During Four-Day Camp

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – For over a dozen high school students from Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy (TJCA) in Mooresboro, N.C., one of the final weeks of their summer vacation has given them new insight into the practical application of mathematics principles they have learned in the classroom. Through a grant from the Stonecutter Foundation (Spindale, N.C.), the teens participated in a brand new program designed to offer them enrichment in the subject of math.

“We have offered a variety of different sessions that we hope will aid in their development,” said Dr. Jim Johnson, assistant professor of math at Gardner-Webb University and a co-creator of the academy. “Things that will aid in their future but that they probably wouldn’t get in the regular classroom experience.”

The Monday through Thursday day-camp style was structured with instructional time in the morning and field trips to local businesses and industries in the afternoon. Around 15 TJCA high school students spent time in classroom sessions such as statistics and analyzing statistical data, basic finance and finance applications, annuities and sinking funds, amortization of loans, property equity, college loans, and more. During the afternoon, participants traveled to the Facebook data center (Rutherfordton, N.C.), Keeter Ford (Shelby, N.C.), and Branch Banking and Trust (BB&T) in Shelby.

“We wanted to go beyond just the principles they would discuss during the regular school year, so we knew we wanted to have a lot of opportunity for application,” Johnson shared.

Students agreed that combining the classroom instructional time with field trips helped solidify the concepts they were discussing. Max Teddy of Shelby, is a rising junior and called the academy both interesting and challenging. “It’s definitely been interesting to see how businesses actually work,” he said.

Other participants, like Kaela Williams of Shelby, also a rising junior, hope the summer curriculum will help when school starts later this month. “Since most people probably aren’t doing math over the summer, I definitely think this program puts us ahead,” Williams offered. “It’s helped me grow in math and I would encourage my classmates to take part if they can because it has been a good experience and it can help you.”

David Advent of Boiling Springs will be a junior as well, and he believes the academy has been very helpful. “We’ve had a chance to see a lot of application of math in the real world and in our society. That has been very beneficial,” he said. “The whole week has given me more to think about as far as options for a college major and my future career.”

Johnson hopes the sometimes-confusing choices facing students will become clearer after taking part in the math academy. “What we’re trying to do is just give them a little information about financial principles and business principles,” he reflected. “In doing that, they get a picture or view of where they might want to go with an occupation.”

The Stonecutter Foundation, a non-profit established in 1945, has invested in numerous Rutherford County community institutions such as the town library and Isothermal Community College. Since its inception, the foundation has made grants totaling \$7.7 million to the surrounding community.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).